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# ECONOMIC PRESSURE AND POLITICAL EXPRESSION: UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF THE *Boycott Movement* AGAINST ISRAELI PRODUCTS

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**Boycotts'** rights have long served as potent tools utilised by individuals and groups to protest perceived injustices or advocate for change. In recent years, the global boycott movement against Israeli products has gained substantial traction, sparking debates and controversies. This article aims to explore the nature of boycotts, their historical context, the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, and the impact and effectiveness of the boycott movement worldwide, with a particular focus on Malaysia.

A boycott is a concerted effort by individuals, organisations, or nations to refrain from purchasing or using goods, services, or engaging with entities to express disapproval or effect change. Boycotts can address various issues including social injustice, labour practices, environmental concerns, and political conflicts. They operate on the principle of economic pressure, aiming to disrupt the financial interests of the target and compel them to alter their behaviour or policies.

Throughout history, product boycotts have been utilised as forms of protest or activism with varying degrees of success. One of the earliest documented instances is the boycott of British goods by American colonists during the colonial period to protest taxation without representation. In the 20th century, the civil rights movement in the United States employed boycotts to challenge segregation and discrimination, notably through the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Product boycotts have also been used in response to apartheid in South Africa, human rights abuses in Myanmar, and labour disputes in various industries.



The impact of product boycotts can vary depending on factors such as the size and scope of the boycott, public awareness and engagement, and the response of the targeted entity. In some cases, boycotts have led to significant financial losses, tarnished reputations, and changes in corporate policies or practices. However, boycotts can also face challenges such as backlash, accusations of ineffectiveness or hypocrisy, and unintended consequences for workers or suppliers associated with the targeted entity.



The Israel-Palestine conflict is a complex and long-standing issue characterised by territorial disputes, competing claims to land and resources, and cycles of violence and unrest. Key points of contention include the status of Jerusalem, the rights of Palestinian refugees, the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and the blockade of Gaza. Despite numerous attempts at peace negotiations and international intervention, a lasting resolution to the conflict remains elusive.



In the USA, the boycott of Israeli products is a hot topic, especially on college campuses and among activists. While there are people who support these boycotts, there's also a big pro-Israel group that opposes them. Some states have even made laws to stop these boycotts, punishing businesses or individuals who take part in them.

The boycott movement against Israeli products has gained momentum in recent years due to concerns over Israel's treatment of Palestinians, human rights violations, and the lack of progress towards a peaceful resolution. The movement targets not only Israeli goods but also multinational corporations with business ties to Israel, such as Nestle, McDonald's, and Hewlett-Packard. Supporters argue that it is a non-violent means of pressuring Israel to change its policies and practices. The global boycott movement also reflects the unity of Muslim communities and conveys their concerns regarding Israel's policies in Palestinian territories.



In the UK, some groups like activists, trade unions, and certain political parties have become more interested in boycotting Israeli products. They're asking stores to stop selling items from Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Supporters of the boycott believe it's a way to make Israel follow international law and stop occupying Palestinian land. However, the UK government strongly disagrees with the boycott movement. They say it undermines Israel's right to exist and have discouraged local councils from joining the boycott.

In Asian countries like Malaysia, Pakistan, and Indonesia, many people also support boycotting Israeli products. This is often because they feel a strong connection to the Palestinian cause and don't agree with what Israel is doing. In places like Pakistan and Indonesia, there have been protests and calls to boycott Israeli goods. However, the impact of these boycotts can vary depending on things like trade relations and if there are other products available in the market.







The boycott movement against Israeli products reflects broader concerns about human rights, justice, and international solidarity. While boycotts have the potential to exert economic pressure and raise awareness about pressing issues, they also face challenges and limitations. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the boycott movement continues to evolve, sparking contentious debates about its efficacy, ethics, and impact on the prospects for peace and justice in the region.

In Malaysia, the boycott movement against Israeli products has received significant support from various segments of society, including civil society organisations, religious groups, and political parties. The Malaysian government has also implemented measures to restrict or ban the sale of Israeli products and prohibit Israeli nationals from entering the country. Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of the boycott in Malaysia remains subject to debate. While some businesses and consumers have embraced the boycott in solidarity with the Palestinian cause, others continue to trade with Israeli companies or purchase Israeli goods through indirect channels.

Globally, in nations like Malaysia, the boycott campaign, apart from affecting the earnings of specific individuals, often fails to bring about significant improvements. For instance, the boycott of McDonald's in Malaysia, operated by the local company Gerbang Alaf Restaurants Sdn Bhd, jeopardise the livelihoods of a majority of its 21,000 predominantly Muslim staff members.



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